

for instance, Dr. Elliot's "new religion," and the increase of unitarianism, both thought to be serious hindrances in the way of our ministry, especially in Oklahoma and Texas securing a better attendance upon church services. With such serious obstructions confronting both preacher and people in this fun-loving, fast age the soul of man must be fed with spiritual food suitable for it, or if it does not find it in the church it will seek it elsewhere. The same decline in church attendance seems to exist in all of them.

An Elder.

A SUCCESSFUL HOME DEPARTMENT.

Seeing in your issue of December 1 an item containing a humorous reference to the "Sunday School Home Department," organized on the penitentiary farm of Louisiana, I am prompted to say just a word concerning another such "Home Department," minus, however, the humorous reference.

There is such a home department (?) conducted in connection with the Virginia state penitentiary at Richmond, which is worthy of the commendation and prayers of every gospel lover.

The work has been organized for many years, and is conducted in a quiet, unassuming way, such as would be becoming to the most modest and reserved of these useful modern auxiliaries of the Sunday school. There is no blowing of trumpets or show of high sounding cymbals. There are no newspaper announcements, or other publicity. Neither is there kept any record to commemorate the works of man. The only record kept in connection with that school, is one in which is recorded the works that God has done among them.

Every Sunday afternoon, some fifteen or more real soldiers of the cross meet there. Each of them carry small bundles of papers, which have been gathered by solicitation among friends and acquaintances, and from donations by the Publication Committee, of Sunday school papers and other religious literature.

Armed with these and the Word of God, and in the strength of His Spirit, they are endeavoring to accomplish what the laws and forces of the nation and commonwealth have failed to do. And more.

There are now some thirteen hundred inmates in the institution; they are divided into two classes, and are compelled to attend the school on alternate Sundays. A platform and organ is provided in the large hall, and seated on benches in long rows these men present the strangest Bible class in the world.

Mr. Morton, the superintendent, is a most devoted Christian and efficient officer. A majority of the teachers are students from Union Theological Seminary, and the remainder are true disciples from among the business men of Richmond.

They have an efficient organist and choir selected from among the prisoners,

and when that chorus of six hundred and fifty voices join in singing "When the Mists Have Rolled Away," with an earnestness seldom, if ever, surpassed in other departments of the Sunday school, one is constrained to say, surely the mist is rolling away; surely the Spirit of God is in this place.

One may perhaps look in wonder on that band of men, each wearing the official brand of the law, each individual representing a broken statute, and each stripe a glaring evidence of the penance which is day by day slowly paying the penalty. And you may ponder in your mind whether such things could be that the Spirit might ever penetrate those ugly stripes and reach the heart that lies hidden there. You have need only to watch the many eager, gospel-hungry faces, under the influence of the corps of skillful and consecrated teachers. Watch them as they lean forward, fearful lest a word be lost. Watch them again as they sing, and, when the choir begins softly, "Why do you wait, dear brother?" watch the tears streaming down the cheeks of many. And then, when Mr. Morton has made his apt and assuring invitation, see the hands go up for Christ.

No, these men are not all Christians, nor even any considerable proportion of them, but this "Home Department" has received many and very great blessings. Scarcely a Sunday passes without some results, and one Sunday last month there were nine who asked for prayers, and announced their intention of living the Christian life.

This Sunday school only asks for your prayers. If Paul, a prisoner, should lead his jailer to Christ, why should it be thought unreasonable that these prisoners might not receive the Word also.

The work is undenominational, and many of the converts have been baptized and have received the sacrament under the various churches of the city.

Frank W. Phillips.

Richmond, Va.

THE CHURCH DEBT PROBLEM SOLVED.

Rev. G. Wilbur Shipley.

The most frightful Bugaboo a congregation can face is a church debt. The deacons or trustees are kept in a state of constant fear lest they should be unable to meet the annual interest. And the principal—that is too fearful a thing to be mentioned. The life of the church is dwarfed and deadened, and the energies of the people are narrowed and circumscribed. When the benevolent offering of the church is taken, the church debt stands a veritable personage beseeching each worshipper to withhold his gifts. It binds the pastor as with chains and forces him to abandon every thought of a larger life and usefulness for the church he serves. When he goes to his study to be alone, it comes on the wings of the morning to be his companion. When he goes out to mingle with his people, the church debt goes along

to be seen and heard of men. When he lies down to rest his weary body and muddled brain, its ghostly form hovers about his couch to inspire sweet dreams. And if to sea or mountain he turns his steps to find relief, he finds the church debt awaiting his arrival. It will not down. Like Diotrephes, it loves to have the preeminence and usually succeeds. It had a beginning, but to all appearances it has no end. It fattens on indifference. Its stay with us is indefinite so long as we have no definite plan for its removal.

As bad as the church debt is, it sometimes becomes necessary for the enlargement of the work of the church. To complete our church, which will cost about \$22,000—we are about to make a debt of \$7,000—but we have arranged for its payment before making it. If one must have an unwelcome visitor, it is best to know just how long he will remain.

The \$7,000 has been divided into seventy shares of \$100 each, all of which have been subscribed by members of the church and congregation, to be paid in ten yearly installments of \$10—each with interest on the principal until it is fully paid. This provides for the interest on the entire loan, and \$700 each year to pay on the principal. For the convenience of the subscribers, they may pay the amount due annually in monthly or quarterly installments. The scheme is adjustable under the same principle. If the congregation is able, to pay 20 per cent annually and finish it up in five years. Some will not want to take an obligation upon themselves for ten years. Give them the privilege of release in case of removal or loss. In any growing community you may safely count on as many additions as removals.

This device has taken well with us, and is commended by good business men of the community. If any church wishes to introduce it, I would be very glad to give fuller information by letter.

The following is a schedule of payments on one share of \$100.—

	Year.	Month.	Quarter.
1910	\$16.00	\$1.33	\$4.00
1911	15.40	1.28	3.85
1912	14.80	1.23	3.70
1913	14.20	1.18	3.55
1914	13.60	1.13	3.40
1915	13.00	1.08	3.25
1916	12.40	1.03	3.10
1917	11.80	.98	2.95
1918	11.20	.93	2.80
1919	10.60	.88	2.65

St. Albans, W. Va.

The Transportation Committee of the American Committee of the World Missionary Conference, which is to meet in Edinburgh June 14, 1910, announces that the Bureau of University travel of Boston has secured the large new steamship, "Kronland," 12,760 tons, of the Red Star Line, as the special World Conference Steamer, sailing from New York at 10 a. m., on May 31, 1910. All who wish to take advantage of the special rates must address the Bureau before January 1.